News release

Countdown to new satellite era

6 July 2006

1728 BST Monday 17 July 2006 sees MetOp, the first European polar orbiter weather satellite, scheduled for launch from Baikonur, Kazakhstan.

MetOp will carry several new instruments for monitoring the atmosphere and the ocean surface, including IASI, a sophisticated instrument to measure atmospheric temperature and humidity, with a greater accuracy than has been possible from space before.

Weather prediction and the monitoring of the Earth's climate system are being revolutionised through immense improvements in the range and quality of data from satellites, and the introduction of MetOp takes weather satellite technology into a new era.

The occasion also marks the beginning of a new chapter in the international partnership between EUMETSAT and NOAA in the United States called the Initial Joint Polar System (IJPS).

Dick Francis of the Met Office satellite team said: "this is easily the most significant satellite launch in my 25 years of working in the science. The advances that MetOp will bring to studying the weather and climate will be enormous."

The launch of the MetOp satellite will be broadcast 'live' via the EUMETSAT web site.

ESA MetOp Meteorological Missions

ESA: Observing the earth

Infrared Atmospheric Sounding Interferometer

EUMETSAT Polar System (EPS)

Notes to editors:

- EUMETSAT is an intergovernmental organisation that provides satellite data services to the Met Office and other European met offices and is a partner in a number of global climate monitoring and other initiatives.
- EUMETSAT is funded by the national meteorological services of Europe, with the UK being the second largest contributor.
- The United States has delivered meteorological data from polar orbit, free of charge, to users worldwide for almost 40 years. MetOp represents Europe's contribution to a new co-operative venture which will secure this weather data service for the decades to come.
- Polar orbiting weather satellites are complementary to those in geostationary orbit. They orbit at a lower altitude — typically 800 km compared with 35,000 km for a geostationary satellite — and can, therefore, observe the Earth in closer detail.

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